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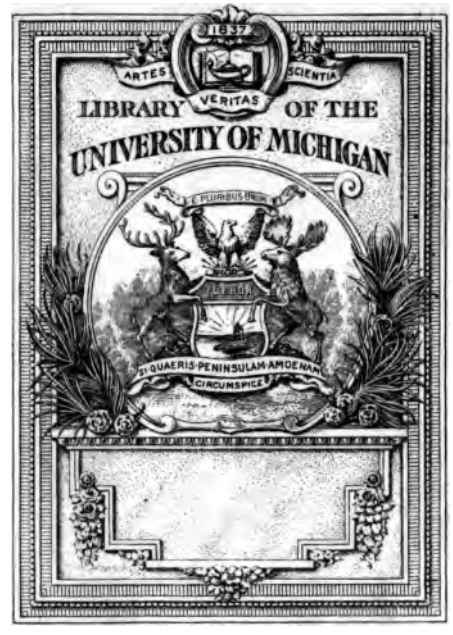
# MODERN FRENCH MASTERS

By Marie Van Vorst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# MODERN FRENCH MASTERS

# MODERN FRENCH MASTERS

BY

MARIE VAN VORST

WITH PREFACE BY

ALEXANDER HARRISON

PARIS
BRENTANO'S
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IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION

OF THE HOSPITALITY

OF

THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE

I INSCRIBE THIS COLLECTION OF ESSAYS WHICH

HAVE ALREADY APPEARED IN ITS PAGES

TO MY FRIEND

GEORGE R. HALKETT

PARIS, 1904
90 RUE DE VARENNE

133525

# PREFACE

THE source of art is the fountain of Love: the winged spirits, Painting, Sculpture, and Poetry, spring from it hand in hand. With affectionate leave-takings and cries of joy at their liberation, they soar into space, the angel of Music out-winging the rest because of more lambent fibre, but she is no more vital nor pulsating than her sisters.

Genius is Love, Talent is the sure perception of essentials combined with the power of expression. Talent, coupled with genius, produces the Love-Child that men call a Masterpiece.

The love-child in Art is the most perfect of all human creations, whether the artist lover be conventional or academic, or rebellious against form and schools, or capricious and eccentric. Emerson said: "Write above your door the word, '*Whim*.'" This, Alfred Stevens, Besnard, Dégas, and the great sculptor

Carries would have applauded, and above all—Whistler!

Whether the lover be brutal and aggressive (Courbet and at times Besnard), shy and distinguished (Puvis de Chavannes), dreamy and caressing (Corot and Cazin), alert and pulsating (Sargent, Zorn), retiring and retrospective (Millet-Lobre), nobly dominating (like Rodin, who says "*il faut planer*")—or varied in impulse—one might say capricious—like Whistler, Bastien Lepage and Monticeli—the obsession of the *motif* will infallibly assert itself in convincing form, the vital impulse of loyal desire will in every case assume masterly shape, and if sequent be great. And as all the world loves a lover, so all the world sooner or later will love the lover's work.

It is extremely difficult to justly decide how potent for good or evil upon the individuality of genius is the influence of the so-called "*Schools.*" The influences of early education and distant ideals often impede true progress. Youth submits naturally to an instruction which may or may not be misdirected. Broad cultivation of general, vital, and æsthetic force, and encouragement of impulse, are advantageous, whereas the domination of the pupil by the master-teacher may be detrimental.

# PREFACE

The valiant and revered old soldier-artist Gérome constantly asserted : *Le dessin c'est le probité de l'art.*

Puvis de Chavannes would have formulated that Art is the expression of love, not of military probity! None the less, however, are those wrong who cavil against the Schools purely from a spirit of adverse criticism.

Great Bastien Lepage, the year before his death, told me that it was his constant struggle to overcome bad habits formed in the École des Beaux Arts, whilst on the other hand, other temperaments have profited normally by the codes of the École.

Jules Breton is said to have left the School a failure, and to have afterwards wrought out his real success in the loneliness of his native fastnesses.

Besnard, in spite of being Prix de Rome, has had a sufficiently broad grasp and requisite assertive audacity to benefit by the Schools. He quickly assimilated such influences as served his purpose, intelligently discarding what might otherwise have hampered him. Besnard's temperamental confidence, and at times his lack even of reverence, while possibly weakening to his inspiration from the point of view of poetical reserve and distinction assured his freedom and

strengthened his audacious fecundity. He at times lacks *tenderness*, but he loves hard! and his are *les défauts des grandes qualités.*

Puvis de Chavannes, gentle, distinguished, noble and shy, was both personally and professionally the Grand Seigneur of modern art. He is full of restraint; thoughtful, reserved, a lover of style. There is no audacity in this painter's work, which is at times wavering and even clumsy in expression, nevertheless Puvis de Chavannes is *un dieu!*

Rodin and Besnard are both masterly, constructive draughtsmen: the former invariably synthetic in execution and generally so in conception. Besnard reaches his apotheosis in La Fée. In the art of both men there is marvellous variety—both of *motif* and treatment. Rodin's gigantic force is calm and sure; Besnard's nervous—sometimes even boisterous as though he were naïvely rebelling against a moment of bashfulness!

If Rodin can be said to possess a fault, it is *an occasional dominance of the grotesque:* a probable result of an intense personality, too great originality. Besnard's over-desire is similar; and he is more frequently garish, over-audacious in his experiments and his expression.

A striking contrast to these painters is Cazin. His art is timid, caressing, poetic. and tender. He lacks the nobility of aim of Puvis de Chavannes. He is intimate, domestic, directly in *liaison* with his painting.

He treats his art as something dear to his heart, peculiarly personal. He loved to fondle nature in her *purring* moments; in the soft hours of twilight, when the spirit of the landscape is moody, fleeting, gently sad submissive and persuasive.

ALEXANDER HARRISON.

CONCARNEAU, *April* 1904.

# CONTENTS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| PUVIS DE CHAVANNES . . . . . | 1 |
| JEAN CHARLES CAZIN . . . . . | 31 |
| RODIN . . . . . | 61 |
| PAUL ALBERT BESNARD . . . . . | 105 |
| STEINLEN . . . . . | 157 |

# ILLUSTRATIONS


PUVIS DE CHAVANNES :

PAGE

Puvis de Chavannes (*From a portrait by Léon Bonnat*) . . . . . 4
Rhône et Saône (Lyons) . . . . . 7
Ste. Geneviève Series (Panthéon) . . . . 11
Ste. Geneviève Series (Panthéon) . . . . 15
Ste. Geneviève Series (Panthéon) . . . . 16
Sorbonne Series, No. 1 . . . . . 19
Sorbonne Series, No. 2 . . . . . 20
"Le Repos" (Amiens) . . . . . 23
"La Rivière" . . . . . 24
"L'Hiver" (Salon d'Arrivée, Hotel de Ville, Paris) . . . . . 27

JEAN CHARLES CAZIN :

The Windmill . . . . . 35
A Picardy Village . . . . . 39
The Death Chamber of Gambetta . . . . 43
Moonlight . . . . . 47
The Village Street . . . . . 51
The Holy Family . . . . . 55
The End of the Village . . . . . 57

RODIN :

Rodin . . . . . 64
"Le Frère et la Sœur" . . . . . 67
Intérieur d'Atelier . . . . . 71
Le Désespoir . . . . . 75
La Porte de l'Enfer . . . . . 77

# ILLUSTRATIONS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| St. John the Baptist | 79 |
| Intérieur d'atelier avec le groupe des "Bourgeois de Calais" | 83 |
| "Le Penseur" | 87 |
| Beau Torse | 89 |
| Le Jardin des Oliviers de l'Homme de Génie | 91 |
| La Tempête | 95 |
| Sirènes Chantant | 97 |
| Buste de Mons. Rodin, par Falguière | 99 |
| **PAUL ALBERT BESNARD:** | |
| Paul Albert Besnard in his Studio | 108 |
| Convalescence | 111 |
| The Sick Woman | 115 |
| La Femme qui se Chauffe | 119 |
| Death | 123 |
| A Portrait in Yellow and Blue | 127 |
| The Fisherman's Daughter | 131 |
| Sunset, Algeria | 135 |
| Horses tormented by Flies | 139 |
| Love | 143 |
| The Flirtation | 147 |
| A Woman of Biarritz | 151 |
| **STEINLEN:** | |
| Street Children | 161 |
| Mother's Love | 165 |
| A Steinlen Poster | 169 |
| Work-Girls | 173 |
| Dry-Point Etching | 177 |
| A Steinlen Poster | 181 |
| A Steinlen Poster | 185 |
| En Attendant | 189 |
| A Study | 193 |

# PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

(From a Portrait by Léon Bonnat)

# PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

In the midst of the most stormy period that France has seen for ten years, in the turbulence of political and national tumult, Puvis de Chavannes passed from his country's life into its history. During the week that saw the fall of the Brisson Ministry, when Paris was a sea of frantic demonstration and safety assured by military law, he died : his life a gospel of serenity and peace, his genius and its expressions a glory to his people, an inspiration to present and future Art. At once his character stands out with the marvellous distinctness all things assume when they first become the past, on the first morrow in which we look back to them as yesterday.

The death of this great frescoist and painter leaves a place unfilled. He has had no equal, no predecessor, and his successor is not easy to name. To produce this original genius, whose grandiose, sublime, yet simple

productions appeal not only to the artist and the critic, but to the peasant, who stands long and enthralled before the Ste. Geneviève of the Panthéon, is the creation of half a century, and due to peculiar circumstances of time and race. He was a great man as well as a great painter; his temperament full of sun and humour, his soul calm and of crystalline clearness.

Puvis de Chavannes was born in Lyons in 1824, of an old Bourguignonne family, the warmth and glory of Burgundy in his veins; he was of vigorous physique, of gay and sanguine temperament, attached by a subtle lien to the school which for six centuries has produced great painters, great sculptors and dreamers.

Puvis de Chavannes went to school as a boy at the Lycée of Lyons, later to the Lycée Henri Quatre in Paris. He was a painter by selection; had partially fitted himself for a scientific profession, when after careful consideration he deliberately chose the career of a painter. From the moment of his decision he never wavered, but gave to the province of art he had made his own the absolute devotion of the enthusiast, the fierce unremitting toil of which only great genius is capable. His student life began in the studio of

RHÔNE ET SAÔNE

(Lyons)

Couture, and lasted but three months. The methods in the atelier were uncongenial to him.

"Is *that* the way you see the model?" he asked of Couture, whose formula of *blanc d'argent*, *jaune de Naples*, vermilion and cobalt produced on the canvas a very different effect to that which Puvis de Chavannes recognised. He left the place and never returned, but continued to paint for several years under Henri Schaffer.

There was no school for the unfolding of this spirit, unlike its times, greater than the masters, and lonely. For as it proved for thirty years, the path of Puvis de Chavannes was to be a solitary way. He walked in it with front serene, and proud stoicism and a savage devotion, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, for who should observe or follow, making unerringly toward the brilliant goal and the immortal fame hidden from those who scoffed at him, and which even his vision but dimly saw.

In 1850 a Pietà was accepted at the Salon; in 1861 "La Paix et la Guerre" received the second medal; one of the decorations was bought by the State, and the painter, in a glow of enthusiasm over this first recognition after eleven years of waiting, presented the

other picture to the Musée at Amiens. These pictures, however, failed to win him general appreciation; he was the object of constant adverse criticism for thirty years, and it was sufficient for him to complete a work to awaken a perfect hubbub of abuse; he was the sport of the wit and the cartoonist, the artistic joke of the time. During this period he bent to his labour, his ears closed, his eyes open to all of beauty, and his mind free to receive impressions. To the heavenly vision alone he was obedient, and when, in 1892, public favour burst forth in a storm of applause, he seemed to hear it scarcely more than he had heard the noise of dispraise. In his atelier at Neuilly, an immense building full of scaffolding and apparatus for sustaining and elevating his pictures, he shut himself from the world and stood before his canvas from morning until night, never breaking his fast until he had completed nine hours of work. Infinitely apart, removed from critics and admirers, he was the absorbed dreamer, seeking ever to transmit, to make visible his dream.

After his work-day was over he gave himself freely to his friends. To the struggling unknown he was most sympathetic, and the fact that a young artist was

**STE. GENEVIÈVE SERIES**

**(Panthéon)**

unpopular and misunderstood would win for him at once an interest from Puvis de Chavannes.

They say of him that he was absolutely indifferent to public opinion ; but once, indeed, criticism touched his spirit to bitterness. " When Hades wants to lay new paving-stones, it will not fail to consign the commission to Puvis de Chavannes, a man of good intentions and vast ideas who has promised for twenty years to give us a masterpiece. This he will never do, for he can neither draw nor paint." This was from the pen of Edmond About, a professed admirer and friend of the painter. Of the defection Puvis never spoke without bitterness. Alexandre Dumas, too, shot his barbs. " Puvis knows so little of drawing that he should scarcely permit himself the luxury of not painting." But Théophile Gautier and Théodore de Banville, the poet who wrote Gringoire, were amongst the few who appreciated Puvis de Chavannes. In the stupid blindness of the time it needed a poet's eye to discern this peculiar ethereal form of beauty to which his own perceptions and productions were kin.

Puvis de Chavannes was surrounded by an atmosphere of unbroken calm through which jarring contact with the world never penetrated to trouble the spirit.

This separation enabled him to give from a height, from the impenetrable distance into which he withdrew, his ennobling inspiring creations.

Hitherto, in mural decorations and in frescoes, landscape formed an inferior part; it was a subordinate background, complementary to the figures, unreal, exaggerated, brilliant, glaring. It remained for Puvis de Chavannes to introduce into his frescoes the country of France with its exquisite atmospheric effects; to make rivers, trees, fields, and woods dignified, expressive parts of his composition; as a landscape painter he occupies a place with Corot, Rousseau, Troyon.

There could not be a greater distance between schools than that of this master and the men of his period.

The loves of the shepherds, the follies of Olympus, Greek myths, with little logical bearing on place or object decorated, had been the subjects chosen for the walls and ceilings of public monuments and public buildings. From these uninspired conceptions to the creations of Puvis de Chavannes is a decided transition. His compositions, never fantastic or impossible, are the highest conceptions of the real, as well as visions of

STE. GENEVIÈVE SERIES

(Panthéon)

STE. GENEVIÈVE SERIES

(Panthéon)

the most exalted flight of a beautiful imagination. He chose his subjects himself always, and never permitted a suggestion. Ceilings he did not like to decorate; it seemed to him an unnatural form. "I seek," he said, "to open a window on to the real," and it has been said that he opened one into the soul.

In his work there is "a union of the mind of the antique and the spirit of Christian art." He was a great believer, as one of his friends said—*un immense croyant.*

Of his faith or dogma his art, however, tells us nothing definite. The legends of saints are no less breathing evidences of a distinct *credo*, than the mythical figures in the Vision Antique and other works of the same character are expressions of harmony with the Greek pagan spirit. It is the expansive, all-embracing province of highest art the faith in, the love for Beauty which is the creed of Puvis de Chavannes; and it is the manner in which this inspired genius conceived and presented the forms of Beauty that separated him so vastly from his materialistic forerunners and contemporaries in France.

Hitherto the human form had been presented, for the most part, for the delectation of the sense alone.

Corporeal, physical beauty absorbed the painter, and awakened in return such admiration as this form of art expressed with greater or less refinement and power will always evoke. The artist, for the most part not believing in soul, scarcely suggested its existence. Not since the early Italians has any one painted as Puvis de Chavannes. Meditation, indifference to the world, absorption in his work, aided his development, "his genius unfolded in solitude." The human form was to him the shadow, and the soul the reality; he made earthly beauty a veil for his idea of the eternal; form he subordinated to his thought. "I try," he said, "through the shade to suggest the essence." Nor let it be advanced that over his incapacity to draw Puvis de Chavannes threw concealing mistiness. His pastels, his drawings, the figures he has seen fit to leave nude, or semi-nude, disprove this.

In 1872 he was made a member of the jury of the first Salon instituted by the State. A vivid remembrance of his own disappointment made him seek to introduce leniency into the judgments. He could not avail, and he resigned. On the next day, all his own canvases (which, no longer being a member of the jury, he had a right to exhibit) were refused. What the

SORBONNE SERIES, No. 1

SORBONNE SERIES, No. 2

criterion of public taste in Art was at this time, certain pictures in the Luxembourg and the Louvre attest! The jurors and the judges are forgotten. Puvis de Chavannes, however, is remembered, with the distinguished company of the Refused—Courbet, Dupré, Baryé, Troyon, Rousseau, Diaz, Millet, Corot. It was not until he had produced a great number of his masterpieces that his success was determined—his genius recognised. He then ceased to be the individual, the sport of vulgar pen and brush, and became the symbol of his work as the flag is of patriotism. He became a gift, a force, a glory, which France before his death revered, and which she justly honours. He was made President of the Academy of Fine Arts at the new Salon, Champs de Mars, and wore the cross of the Legion of Honour.

It would take volumes to speak in detail of the works of Puvis de Chavannes. A list of them is as follows. Thus far I think it can be said that there are no volumes that deal with him or his works technically. The technique of painting can only be interesting to painters when discussed by the profession; and such books are almost unknown.

"The Pietà" (1850); "La Paix et la Guerre"

(1861); "Travail et Repos" (1865), in the Musée of Amiens; "Ave Picardia Nutrix" (1865); "Ludus," "Pro Patria," "Doux Pays," all in the gallery of Picardie (1879); "Marseille, Porte d'Orient," and "Marseille, Colonie Grecque"—Marseilles Museum (1867); "St. Radegonde and Charles Martel"—Hôtel de Ville at Poitiers (1872); "Ste. Geneviève of the Panthéon, Paris" (1877); "Bois Sacré," "La Rhône et La Saône," "L'Inspiration Chrétienne,"—Musée at Lyons (1883); "L'Art Céramique," "Inter Artes et Naturam," and "Groupe"—Musée at Rouen (1890-92); "L'Hiver," "L'Eté," "Victor Hugo offrant son Lyre à la Ville de Paris"—Hotel de Ville, Paris (1893); "Lettres, Arts et Muses"—Sorbonne Paris (1894). Lastly, another continent called his genius to create something for its generations to hand down to fame, and for the Boston Library Puvis de Chavannes painted "Le Génie Messager de Lumière."

"The Childhood of Ste. Geneviève," four panels to the glory of the patron saint of Paris, covers a portion of the right wall of the Panthéon. This was the first decoration given at the close of the war of the Commune. The subjects are the pious Childhood, the

"LE REPOS"

(Amiens)

"LA RIVIÈRE"

Consecration, and the Miracles of the Saint; and there are no more beautiful expressions of religious art in the contemporaneous French school.

The figures are strong, simple, natural. The background is a summer landscape, of exquisite loveliness. In the foreground are the rugged, rustic peasants, the pastoral life, and the pure figure of the child Geneviève. The atmosphere is tender, the composition dignified and impressive, and the scenes are pervaded with peace. These pastoral paintings were a new era in the school of *plein air*. One does not ask if the setting is an anachronism. Puvis de Chavannes, to aid him in the production of this masterpiece, read no histories, studied no text-books regarding the costumes and manners of the times of the saint. He went to the plain of Nanterre, absorbed himself in the atmosphere of the country around Paris. The Seine and Mont Valérien became his background and setting. Then he shut himself in his studio at Neuilly, where Ste. Geneviève and her people appeared to him as he painted them on the Panthéon walls. If these pictures suggest the Florentine renaissance, it is because the monastic religious, the naive simplicity, are sympathetic with the spirit of the Italian painters. The frescoes are full of a

fine effulgence, animated by a flame as mysterious as that in a virgin's lamp before a dim mediæval shrine. He received the order in 1883 to decorate the staircase in the Palais des Arts at Lyons. He painted the Bois Sacré and the symbolic figures of the Rhône and the Saône. For this work he received the sum of 40,000 francs. His expenses were 10,000, and the fresco took him three years to paint, making about 6000 francs that he was paid for these splendid works of art—the price that a modern portrait-painter of distinction would refuse for a picture of one of the *beau-monde*. This order completed, the painter looked and waited in vain for new walls and decorations. "For me," he said, "the horizon seems to close down upon the future: there remains nothing for me to do but to battle against indolence; but if I can inspire youth with the example of a life of labour, not altogether fruitless, I shall have lived to some purpose." And again: "They come slowly," he said, "these vast spaces whereon I may express myself with broad, free sweep." When he first received the order to decorate the hemicycle of the Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne at a price of 35,000 francs, he refused, and the committee received a letter of acceptance from him the next day.

" L'HIVER "

(Salon d'Arrivée, Hôtel de Ville, Paris)

In the meantime he had found his subject; as for the question of the ridiculous price offered him, he did not even refer to it.

His production was enormous, his energy untiring. After months of labour he would go to the seaside, and give himself up to rest and indolence. "In these times I am in despair," he said, "and feel as though I should never work again. Delightful as is this repose, it is to the days of labour that I look back with the greatest pleasure. It seems as though my power were gone for ever." This he wrote from Dieppe, where he was digging shrimps in the sand like a boy. He began his studies for the career of an artist late. What other men accomplished and put by he saw fulfilled in his own day. And because of his unusual vigour and fecund power of production he realised in mature years what to others are the dreams of youth. It is this juvenance carried into ripe age that gives a virginal freshness to his painting. His fresco in the Boston Library, as well as the work upon which he was engaged at the time of his death—"The Old Age of Ste. Genevieve," a new series for the Panthéon—far from suggesting declining power, possess the fresh bloom by which only the young spirit can make beautiful its

creations. The painter had reached an apotheosis of power. He had been the product of a country whose times are strange and complex. His land, his race, its blood and tradition generated his genius, and he leaves to it in turn his glory, and the stirring example of his life, at the time of his country's need, it may be well said; and the relics of his beautiful art will remain, when political crusade, when exaggerated types and schools are past and forgotten.

# JEAN CHARLES CAZIN

# JEAN CHARLES CAZIN

In the month of March 1901, the French painter Jean Charles Cazin died at Lavandou, a little nook in Southern France on the borders of the Mediterranean. He was in the plenitude of his talent, in the rich and mellow prime of his life. He had gone to Lavandou on one of his frequent voyages in search of change and refreshment; he died there alone.

It is an ancient prayer—"Lord, may I die in my bed," but rather an original idea to seek to pass out of life in the very bed where one was born! This, however, was Cazin's dream. He had carefully preserved every beloved detail in the home of his childhood and youth in Samer (Pas-de-Calais); thither he planned to return and pass his last days. He longed to inhabit again his boyhood's room; to go forth for ever surrounded by all that had welcomed him into a world he was to leave richer for his existence. Fate disposed otherwise.

He was born in 1846, near Samer, a little town in the neighbourhood of Boulogne. His parents were well-to-do, his father a doctor of some renown. Cazin attended the college at Boulogne, and received later his baccalaureate at Lille.

In order to facilitate his artistic studies his parents sent him to Paris, where he joined the art class of the beloved Boiscaudron. This teacher's influence on his pupils has been enormous. It must be remembered that he also instructed Rodin and Lhermitte. The tuition was free in the little class near the École de Médecine, and this studio made hot war against the more conservative Beaux-Arts.

Cazin never seems to have considered his student days at an end. He was perpetually learning; for ever pursuing his art as an inexhaustible classic; seeking to discover and develop new technique; to test to the uttermost his capacity. Later in life, when long past the student age, he studied in Antwerp, and his fine figure, with noble head on which the hair was already turning grey, was constantly seen in the museums, where he wandered—enjoying the masterpieces he admired and understood.

He married, early, a woman who shared his artistic

THE WINDMILL

tastes, and who herself has added to modern art. He exhibited his first pictures in the salon of '65-66, and was also among those men who were in later years proscribed by the jury, and with his colleagues reaped the singular benefit of popularity because of adverse criticism, and became a founder of the new salon, known as the Champ de Mars. He had apparently no feverish desire to rush before the public, to present creations of his youth for criticism. Possessed of that rare patience which can wait for fame, he did not choose to force a future, and put off rather than sought a definite introduction to the world.

Meanwhile he matured his work, labouring at his canvases during that fruitful period when hope is most sanguine and talent freshest; he himself was only timidly appreciative of the work done in the interval between his appearance in the salon of 1876 and that of 1887.

In 1887, a space of more than ten years from his début, he exhibited "Le Chantier," and from this time, with slight interruptions, down to the date of his death, his abundant work never ceased to delight the public, which accorded to Cazin the unusual mark of instantaneous favour. His work has been seen constantly in

England ; it is very popular in Holland, on the Continent everywhere, and he has enjoyed a marked success in America.

Later followed "La Fuite en Egypte" (1877), "Le Voyage de Tobie" (1878), "Le Départ" (1879), "Ismaël" (first medal, 1880), "Tobie" (1880), "Souvenir de Fate" (1881), "Judith," "Agar and Ismaël" (1883).

Then followed an interval when the public looked in vain for Cazin's name amongst exhibitors. Modern life failed to inoculate this meditative artist with the fatal haste, the febrile, nervous desire to do everything in a moment. Nothing disturbed his habits of study and the slow working out of his ideas. He retired again from public notice to mature his conceptions before showing them. Art and art alone took Cazin hither and thither on his frequent capricious voyages.

It was as though, suddenly, in a dream, some landscape beckoned him—an Italian evening or a moonlit dyke it might be summoned him; for with little warning he was in Paris to-day, in Tuscany to-morrow. Fortunately he had a family who not only understood his brusque departures, but who enjoyed the journeys

A PICARDY VILLAGE

as well as did the master himself. He was in every land a student; in the Pays Bas he was an ardent painter, in Italy a constant visitor at the galleries and museums, in England a potter. The art of ceramics always strongly interested him, and he has proved himself a clever exponent of it.

For a Frenchman he travelled widely, making many trips to Holland and Flanders, Italy and England. He was keenly appreciative of the art with which these countries teemed, and studied with benefit to his own methods the Flemish and Dutch masters as seen in the Pays Bas—his imagination impressed by the sober stretches of Netherland landscapes, by the velvet seductiveness of Italian hillsides and golden towns, and the misty loveliness of English country. Of Holland he has left us numerous admirable studies, etchings, pictures—the mills and the flat meadows, melancholy dyke lines, scenes on the Zuyder Zee and in Amsterdam. All these are familiar and delightful to his admirers. Possibly he has produced no more perfect piece of work than the picture called "Moonlight on the Zuyder Zee."

Holland, so long a school and educator and inspirer of landscape painters, has found no modern more quick

to represent her country or more appreciative of its native art than Cazin. There is in his work a suggestion of the spirit of the masters of Holland and Flanders far away and removed as he is by his mysticism and the ephemeral handling of colour from the frank colourists of the Dutch School. There is the minute attention to detail, the clever value given to scheme, the massing of much in small compass, the master art of concentrating on the important point. When the painting is analysed the critic discovers that every detail is scrupulously studied.

Italy inflamed him with a love for symbolic subjects. The spirituality of the old masters was an evident inspiration to him. But, in considering Cazin, while interested to trace the different elements he found sympathetic and appealing, one fails to discover anything to detract from Cazin's own absolute originality.

England, eminently *connoisseur* of landscape painting, has seen fit to approve Cazin. His exhibition in London was received with the most flattering appreciation. England knew Cazin for one of those foreigners who had adopted London as a dwelling-place, and who was in sympathetic touch with the English people.

THE DEATH CHAMBER OF GAMBETTA

There exists therefore for him a feeling of personal friendship.

He came with his family to England in 1871, and remained there for three years. His original project was to form a school of art of which he should be master. This plan failing, he went instead to Fulham, where he personally directed the management of a pottery, and was thus enabled to carry out his desire to experiment in this plastic art. In this he was successful. His exhibition in 1882 at the Central Union placed him amongst the first masters in modern ceramics, and after his artistic display of clays, France gave him a decoration. There is a case of Cazin's pottery in the Luxembourg Museum.

He was received at first with a certain wonder. His drawing, intensely delicate, was forceful and striking because of its frank ingenuousness, its primitive simplicity. In his colouring harmonious and extraordinary tones ineffably soft, lights and shades indefinitely blended until at first the picture appeared through a haze, whilst under the eyes it slowly took form out of the mist; lines disengaged themselves, shapes grew distinct, and the perfect little picture fully declared itself. A good example of this is "Nuit d'Etè" (Seine et Marne).

It will be readily understood that this novel technique, at the time of its appearance, did not pass unchallenged. It was evidently a manner, an eccentricity —a trick of colour, a playing with the public vision! Many endeavoured to understand and reproduce the "Cazin effects." How was it done? And it was bruited by the baffled that M. Cazin painted behind locked doors! The sorcery of the master was not to be discovered, nor was there an élite who, behind the curtain out of gaping sight, learned the power that created "Moonlight on the Zuyder Zee."

Will amateurs learn one day that rules of rhetoric cannot teach the scribbler how to write a lyric?—that the atelier cannot impart the sign to make brush and palette create that which is none other than the *individuality* of the painter? Cazin's tender, mysterious treatment, Corot's profound tranquillity, Turner's golden flame, the genius of the masters, *are* their technique.

Cazin knew nothing of the common struggle of those artists who are obliged to ingratiate themselves into the public favour. He was accepted at once, and soon beloved—an uncommon biography. And his agreeable relations with the public, the atmosphere of

MOONLIGHT

welcome and liking with which his work was met, his own family relations (of the most happy and genial kind), all is evident in his art. His pictures are full of the influence of the repose—"*la douceur infinie qui répand les âmes qui sont en paix.*"

Cazin possessed a strongly developed decorative sense. His contemporaries appreciated it when they gave him the supervision of the hanging of pictures at the different exhibitions and made him conservateur of the Musée du Luxembourg itself. This special sense is evident in his work, as, for example, the grouping in "L'Ours et l'Amateur des Jardins," "La Parole de Socrate," in the drawings and studies for his various pictures, designs which in many instances strongly suggest fresco and are Italian in their *genre*.

Until 1888 his subjects had been chiefly symbolic, chosen from Biblical scenes; figures predominated in these canvases. After this period the character of his work changed, and he devoted himself to landscape painting, and as a landscapist he will pass down to fame. For Cazin chose to surround his conception of figure-painting with the very acme of his art; with the fruit of years of patience, the mystery of labour and all that his poetic soul knew of the seasons and of

changing nights and days. For even in the most important canvases, where figures fill the foreground, the value of the paintings is in their backgrounds and surroundings.

Take, for example, "Agar and Ismaël in the Desert." In the picture the eye leaves the group of desolate mother and child for the country's desolation, the arid sand world, dangerous, sinister—the parching sky, the pitiful scrub growth. The thought of the narrative is lost in Cazin's delineation of the landscape, in the atmosphere and painting of the picture, and in its subtle composition.

As a rule, for the human drama the scene is the setting, whereas with Cazin humanity *illustrates* the text of his creation. His landscapes, his fields, meadows, dunes, deserts, are the picture, and the figures become subordinate, suggestive, taking their character from the character of the soil and country.

The streets of the rustic villages have spoken to Cazin, and told him their secrets at evening time. His studies of the little town near his native village are especially lovely. These French parishes have whispered their mysteries, as twilight, slipping from gold to grey, steals down the twisting lanes. Cazin has caught

THE VILLAGE STREET

the sadness of the country, its monotonous desolation, as well as its repose. The pictures in themselves are almost narrative ; the wide slopes of bare meadow after harvesting, the sombre note of little pine-clusters on a sandy hill, and the melancholy of the dyke lands, his own country has spoken to him as a mother to a son who understood and who will interpret her well. See the "Ruisseau en Picardie," "Lac en Picardie," "Route près d'Equihen," "Moonlight at Equihen." It is into these sympathetic surroundings that he introduced the studies he cared to make of human life, Biblical subjects and a few classic themes. These are not anachronisms, strictly speaking, but show a modern spirit, which places his conception of Christ amongst men and women of to-day, as Rembrandt placed his religious pictures in the land of his birth, which makes the divine legend suddenly appear in the centre of the Norman wheat-field, or sends Mary and Joseph with the Holy Child by moonlight from a little provincial farm in Picardy. Tobias by a French riverside walks with a celestial visitor. Judith is a woman of the people, and nothing but the essence of tradition may be read in Cazin's popularising of Bible story, in his introduction of Hebraic legend to the scenes and actors

of humble, everyday peasant life. His painting of "Judith" was originally intended for the Gobelin manufactories.

Despite the fact that his mind was full of his historic and epic legend, and that dramatic subjects constantly presented themselves to his attention as schemes for pictures, his trend towards landscape was too strong, and it is extremely interesting to observe this impassioned hero-worshipper carried toward his dreamy, peaceful current which became his inevitable course. As the painter of lovely landscapes, Cazin is known chiefly as the portrayer of moon-setting and falling rain on a far, unknown country side.

Some one has said, "Turn a hundred painters loose in France before their respective bents have been decided—and ninety-nine will be landscape painters."

So paintable is the French country, so seductive to the senses and imagination, that the land germinates and brings forth the very finest fruit of open-air painting: witness Troyon, Daubigny, Corot, Lorrain, Poussin, Puvis de Chavannes, Cazin.

Cazin had a magnificent head. His eyes were blue, his features finely chiselled and strong. His manners were most charming, and he was widely beloved.

THE HOLY FAMILY

## JEAN CHARLES CAZIN

Properly speaking, no school perishes with the death of Cazin, although, strangely enough, no master displayed greater avidity to inculcate principles of art.

THE END OF THE VILLAGE

Despite his pedagogic passion Cazin leaves behind him no disciples who menace his fame. His art was too personal and varied to permit of a school's foundation.

His pictures have been purchased widely on the

Continent and in England and America. Time and space do not permit a catalogue of the canvases which have appeared in public and private collections. When Cazin died he was at work on two pictures destined for the State. They are symbolic subjects, and were intended for the walls of the Sorbonne. They go by the titles of "L'Ours et l'Amateur de Jardins," and "La Maison de Socrate."

In the Luxembourg Museum are to be seen several good examples of Cazin's work: "Agar et Ismaël," "La Chambre de Gambetta," a tragic representation of the room in which Gambetta died, two landscapes, a case of pottery, and a bust in bronze.

Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago possesses the "Judith"; "Tobie" is in the gallery at Lille; "La Journée Faite" in the Lyons Museum; "Souvenir de Fête" in the Museum of the City of Paris; "Le Chantier" belongs to Monsieur May.

Alexander Harrison, the American painter, said, in speaking of Cazin: "He is a striking contrast to *Courbet*, for example, whose manner of painting is insistent; whereas Cazin conceals, rather than displays, his technique. His qualities are subtle and elusive. He avoids realistic brutality; his delicacy is a semi-

fastidiousness in contrast to the almost *féroce* realism of Courbet, and the robust Troyon.

"His attitude towards his ideal is reserved, caressing. Suavity, a certain suggestion of concealment distinguish his work. Sometimes the unvaried tone is monotony.

"His subjects were not chosen from the great solitudes; and although figures are often absent from his canvases, the pictures always suggest the human element and are full of associations.

"His townsfolk in the Norman village where he lived seldom saw Cazin at work during daylight; but belated fishermen, returning in the small hours of late night, would find him wandering along-shore, or pondering as he paced the high sand-dunes.

"These reveries were part of Cazin's science and art; he applied and developed the accumulated science of long study, and created the medium best fitted to express his ideas and the especial times of day he cared to paint.

"His use of a *wax medium* accounts for some of the quality of his work."

# RODIN

RODIN

# RODIN

In the vast presentation of subject, in the numberless examples of cause and effect, demand and supply, representative of the tide reached by commerce, industries, and arts in this nervous, intense modern civilisation, there is nothing worthier of note than the work of Rodin, the sculptor, to whom France at last has seen fit to give general recognition.

Without the walls proper of the Exposition, at the Pont de l'Alma, a building known as the Pavillon Rodin was constructed, wherein a collection, although incomplete, divulged Rodin to a world who did not know him, and delighted his admirers. The concession of the site for the little gallery marks the history of yet another struggle between artist and prejudice. "In spite of my efforts," Rodin said, "and a widespread cordial feeling toward me in other countries, Paris was so loth to grant me this place, that had it not been for two of my friends

—a Minister, and a Conseiller Municipal—I should have pleaded in vain ! "

Rodin, together with his architect, constructed, arranged, and decorated this hall. It is a circular *salon*, with a succession of smaller rooms surrounding the main rotunda like a gallery ; the walls are covered with pale yellow stuff; and a splendid flood of sun pours in from skylight and sides, all of which are of glass. Within this limited space are gathered many of the most important statues, bronzes, and busts, and the casts of several originals which it was impossible to secure for this exhibition. "Les Bourgeois de Calais," the "Balzac," the incompleted group of " Victor Hugo," " Porte de l'Enfer " (" Door of Hell "), " L'Age d'Airain " ("The Age of Bronze "), " L'Homme au Nez Cassé " (" The Man with the Broken Nose "), " L'Eve " (Eve), " L'Éternelle Idole " (" The Eternal Idol "), " La Guerre " (" War "), " La Pensée " (" Thought " or " Reverie "), " Psyche," " The Moon bids Adieu to Earth in order to ascend to the Zenith," " Amor Fugit " (" Love Flees "), " Le Printemps " (" Spring "), L'Homme qui s'Eveille " (" The Awakening of Man "), the busts of Jean Paul Laurens, of Dalou, of Mirabeau, Falguière, Mme. M. V. Besides these

"LE FRÈRE ET LA SŒUR"

there are countless figurines, little groups, *ébauches*, studies, schemes for old and new work, heads, torsos in plaster, marble, bronze, iron, and stone; whilst about the walls are hung the photographs of works not exhibited and the drawings of the sculptor.

The acknowledgment and recognition by Paris of her great son has not come too late. In spite of the fact that he has been for forty years an object of intense, displayed hatred ("so keen a hate," he says, "that if Paris had been Italy in the time of the Borgia, I should have been poisoned"), in spite of the enmity of artists and populace, this tardy reception finds him unembittered, his temper warm and human, and with hand quick and outstretched to the tardy greeting. The man himself is so simple, so great, that he is even touched by the long-denied meed of praise.

Standing before the head of "L'Homme au Nez Cassé" (curiously enough the milestone of his first defeat, refused by the Salon in 1864), his masterpieces all around him, in the mellow light of the autumn sun falling on exquisite marble or dark bronze, Rodin said: "It is good to be alive. I find existence marvellous, glorious. These effigies of human pain" (and he indicated a bronze representing an emaciated poet dying on the

knees of the Muse) " no longer make me suffer as they used. I am happy. To me nature is so beautiful, the truths of humanity are so thrilling, that I have grown to adore life and the world. *Je trouve que la vie est tellement belle !* " His face was fairly luminous. This apotheosis of *bien-être* that the sculptor has reached in late middle age is perhaps Nature's gift, her reward to him who, in spite of discouragement and the world's scorn, has for forty years been her faithful, adoring disciple. France is true to her traditions in her treatment of her celebrated men. She has slaughtered a king, dethroned an emperor, sold a deliverer (Jeanne d'Arc), and to her immortal artists offers as a stirrup-cup at starting such draughts of bitterness that if the very divinity within them did not preserve them for posterity's good, who can tell whether Carpeaux, Delacroix, Manet, Rude, Berlioz, Garnier, Baryé, Puvis de Chavannes, and Rodin would not have fallen by the way ?—and all the names are not here ! Prejudice and schools in every country and age have their scores to level. (Shades of Shelley, Keats, Chatterton, will bid England hold her peace.) Puvis de Chavannes (Rodin's mighty brother amongst France's great artists) stretched toward his laurels in old age a hand that stiffened in

INTERIEUR D'ATELIER

death before it could hold the wreaths of fame. One and all of the illustrious ones were misapprehended ; and Auguste Rodin, when he made his first appeal to public judgment, stepped into this rank, and awakened " the idiot risibles of a gaping stupidity," instead of the grave appreciation that was his due.

Rodin is of the people, and was born in Paris in 1840. His parents were poor, and during the long years—apparently fruitless, and heaping disappointment on disappointment—urged him to take to a trade which would bring him immediate results. " I have no history," he says ; " my life is simply the story of constant struggle and unchanged poverty. I was poor, but I was strong ; and in the moments when I was not bitterly discouraged I felt a certain stimulus in setting myself against the world. Over by the École de Médecine, in Paris, is the little school where I went as a boy, and where I first took simple lessons in drawing."

He acknowledges the influence of no directed instruction on his art. In his young manhood he was a workman in the *atelier* of Baryé, and the models of twisted cobras, lithe tigers, crouching panthers, maddened lions—their graceful contours and curves, the attitude of savage grace—may have impressed their

images on the keen memory of the young journeyman. At all events, in his types of the animal triumphant in man, in the pose and gesture of *abandon*, there is much that suggests kinship between the human being and the uncivilised beast—the barbarous grace and beauty of both. But Rodin is not conscious of the effect of any school : in the *ateliers* of both Baryé or Carrier-Belleuse he sold his skill for his daily bread.

In 1864 he sent the head of "The Man with the Broken Nose" to the Salon. This mask, perfectly modelled, worthy the seal of antiquity, was refused "because of its originality." The refusal was a bitter blow to Rodin ; and whether or not the verdict appeared to him just, it had the effect of intimidating him, and he waited thirteen years before again appearing before his adverse jury.

At this period (1864-70), on the edge of his own doorstep, as it were, with no power to franchise the threshold, he worked, a paid daily labourer, for Baryé, Carrier-Belleuse, and in 1871-77 for Van Rasbourg in Brussels. "During the long time," he says, "when I gave what power I possessed to others, my thoughts were keen and alive toward my own creations. On Sunday I was free, and that day I afforded a model for myself and worked in my little room from the life. I

LE DÉSESPOIR

tried to make the most of every expression, every turn, of my varying model,—for the human being changes constantly, and my time was infinitely precious and in-

LA PORTE DE L'ENFER

finitely short. I was never able to bring to satisfactory termination very much during these *séances*. It was in the paid week, it was during the days of others, that I really produced. I permitted myself then a careful mental study of what Sunday had suggested and had

failed to achieve. As I thus meditated, fleeting thoughts and inspirations came to me, and I would hold them, force them to remain, until at the following *séance* with my model I could mould their likeness in clay. I consider that this training of my memory was of inestimable advantage."

In 1877 "L'Age d'Airain" was sent to the Salon, and accepted. The extraordinary criticism it evoked is sufficient praise. It was said to be "too perfect," and the sculptor was accused of having "cast the statue from life"! When these insulting suspicions had been disproved to the eminent jury's satisfaction, Rodin's statue—a strong, beautiful male form of Greek purity and classical simplicity of outline—received, in 1880, a third-class medal. This was bought by the State, and can be seen in the Luxembourg Gardens.

Thus, successively accused first of too great originality, second of too faithful realism, Rodin was received by his censors; but ridicule reached its dizzy height when at the Salon of 1898 was exhibited the statue of Balzac, ordered by the Société des Gens de Lettres, and refused by them.

Above the *éclat* of that time, when Paris made rendezvous before the rejected monument to laugh and

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

immoderately jeer, it is hard even now to raise a reasonable voice.

The august Société, which claimed that it "failed to recognise Balzac in the statue," should have been put to the blush by a commercial man, a Monsieur Pellerin, who pleaded to purchase the Balzac. The sculptor refused, and took the offending plaster back to his own workshop. "I was cruelly hurt and made ill," Rodin said, "and it did me great harm." A brilliant pamphlet was forthcoming. however, by Arsène Alexandre, which suggested to at least part of the intelligent spectators that "they may have laughed too soon." The Balzac has held, during the Exposition, chief place in the Pavilion Rodin, where those who still seek it for its stimulus to laughter may find it, and where others may study it to calm advantage. France's greatest novelist, the writer of the *Comédie Humaine*, as conceived and made to exist in sculptured form by a man like Rodin, is a combination in itself not without interest. There is in this work a tremendous, almost savage force, a virility and power, an abandonment to subject above form, characteristic of Rodin. Balzac is posed as a spectator, his arms folded across the chest under the flowing monk's robe which the novelist assumed when at work. His body is rested on one backward-drawn

foot, whilst the other, a little advanced, throws out the line of leg and knee. The head, superb and massive, is lifted and backward inclined ; the lips are parted, the eyes, deep-set, caverns of thought under heavy brows, look out at the defile of humanity which the romancer so keenly studied to immortal results. This Balzac is *moqueur*, *rêveur*, student, analyst ; and the genius which has —roughly if you will—mightily modelled the Titian of literature, has finely comprehended, with the kinship of greatness, the type of the immortal Parisian. The stupendous figure has nothing in common with the approved style of statues to great men that mark the public places and squares of our cities and towns, and there is everything in the *outrance* of presentation, the novel, daring, crude handling, to bewilder the crowd who distrust what they fail to understand. But it is sufficient for the serious, unprejudiced observer to come once and look, to return and gaze, in order to recognise that he is before a masterpiece—the effigy of a human being appearing as in life from a flowing garment, symbol of the art of the romancer, the robe of imagination with which he enveloped his analyses. It becomes thus impossible not to feel the power of Rodin's Balzac as one studies the gigantic head emerging from the

INTERIÉUR D'ATELIER AVEC LE GROUPE DES "BOURGEOIS DE CALAIS"

drapery as the author lifts his eyes on the comedy of life.

In 1882 appeared simultaneously "St. Jean préchant" ("St. John the Baptist preaching") and "The Creation of Man"; and down till 1885 the busts of Jean Paul Laurens, Carrier-Belleuse, Victor Hugo, Antonin Proust, Dalou, were exhibited at the Champs de Mars. To subsequent exhibitions were sent busts of Puvis de Chavannes, "Le Cariatide," "La Danaïde," "La Pensée," monument to Victor Hugo, the "Balzac," "Le Baiser," "L'Ève," and the busts of Falguière and Rochefort.

In the Salon of 1889 was exhibited the group known as *Les Bourgeois de Calais*, ordered by Calais, and which, cast in bronze, stands to-day on the market-place of that town. This piece, which has not its compeer, commemorates the heroism of six of the city's citizens in the days when England was France's conqueror. Froissart with characteristically simple pathos tells the story. Calais, taken by the English, was destined to destruction, but King Edward offered to spare the populace on the condition that six notable bourgeois should come forth to him bare-headed, bare-footed, ropes round their necks, and the city's keys in their hands. "I shall do with them according to my

good pleasure "—which good pleasure, as the world knows, was to grant pardon and safe *convoi*, at the plea of the gracious Queen Philippa. But they have no dream of pardon, these men, who one after another seem again to pursue their expiatory way for us across the ages. The grateful people of the town have bathed their naked feet with tears of adoration and farewell, and, devoted to probable death and to sure humiliation, they are before us. History has kept the names of four : Eustache de St. Pierre, Jean d'Aire, Jacques and Pierre de Wissant. On their faces are depicted all things save the sense of defeat. In the drawn visages, convulsed hands, in the bent and defiant attitude, are pride, hauteur, grief, resolution. The wasted forms bear the marks of siege, privation, hunger, and anxiety, but there is no trace of submission in the mediæval vicarious offering. Old age is here, passive in a moment of sublime renunciation ; youth, rebellious at this demand of Fate ; middle life, desperate in tense despair. These figures are real and human ; this is modern realism with classic delineation. Verse or prose, brush or pencil, could not, line for line, have caught the story better and told it more expressively. The mass loves a work of art that tells a tale, and here

"LE PENSEUR"

the layman and the most difficult symbolist may alike

BEAU TORSE

enjoy. A narrative is told, and Art, in the mode of recount, is elevated.

Rodin's busts are strikingly *ressemblant*—not always flattering to the subject, but remarkable revelations of

the character of the individuals themselves. His busts of Victor Hugo and Henri Rochefort and Jean Paul Laurens are especially fine.

"In making a portrait, for example," Rodin says, "it requires several *séances* for me to get into the spirit of my model. I am seeking always the distinguishing trait that makes this man or woman an individual different from the rest of his kind. When I discover this *trait marquant* I dwell upon it, I insist on it—I caricature it, if you like—until my bust has likeness; then I know *that I know* my model."

The sculptor has been at work for fifteen years on the famous "Porte de l'Enfer" ("Door of Hades"), ordered by the Museum of Decorative Art in Paris. Of this stupendous undertaking, as yet incomplete, only the most inadequate idea can be given. The portal measures six mètres in height; the panels and borders are filled with countless figures in *bas* and high relief. Above the doors is a nude male figure in a sitting posture, elbows on the knees, head sunk on the hands. This is *Dante*, dreamer, meditator, before whose eyes passes the vision of the condemned. The groups, couples, and single figures represent everything that a fertile talent can conceive of dread and grief; there are visible

LE JARDIN DES OLIVIERS DE L'HOMME DE GÉNIE

Greed, Lust, Crime, Despair—in short, all the worst of the World, the Flesh, and the Triumphant Fiend. At the lower corners are masks of Pain, and around and about them Satyrs, Centaurs, Nymphs male and female, human forms of all ages and nations, run their terrible race. These remarkably modelled figures are entwined, interlaced, leaning the one on the other, seeking to escape, pursuing, haunting, and fleeing, repelling, clasping in eternal desire, eternal horror, eternal despair. Here are Paola and Francesca in their own forms, and their symbols in many another ; here, even, are tiny bodies of infants, "who seek with sightless eyes to penetrate limbo and the shades." No one but Rodin since the days of the Ghibellines could have ventured upon this subject, and of the tremendous result there has as yet been one general verdict of praise. It is Rodin's *chef-d'œuvre*. The doors are to be cast in bronze, and are all but in the hands of the casters.

Carpeaux, Rude, Chapu, have given to France splendid monuments. The sculpture of these men is powerful, virile, telling,—their technique that of the schools, their expression at once comprehensible. This art, picturesque, decorative, ends with the production, and suggests as a whole nothing beyond that which is

before the eyes. Rodin's art, by reason of his more complex, subtle temperament, his more artistic sympathy and profounder insight into nature and humanity, has been a renaissance to modern sculpture, and is to plastic art what Puvis de Chavannes was to decorative painting. He calls himself a student of human life, a disciple of nature, from which he inspires himself, and in an original, individual manner expresses in tangible form his conceptions of the mysteries of life. He has caught the ineffable moment of passion, and dared to transfix the embrace of love in stone. He has dared to portray by his art that which poet, musician, painter, have not waited to confess is an inspiration to all creation ; and is it not possible that those who are so hasty to malign and criticise Rodin do not understand him ? At all events in his latest productions he shows no sign of temporising, and chooses unflinchingly to be an expositor in stone of the passions, the sensations, and crises of humanity as he apprehends them.

Alongside of the high spirituality reached in the apotheosis of renunciation in the group of "Les Bourgeois de Calais," alongside of the intellectuality of the "Victor Hugo," are examples of the grossly material. Here is the exquisite roundness of youth in "Brother and

LA TEMPÊTE

Sister " ("Frère et Sœur"), a group of charming, innocent

SIRÈNES CHANTANT

loveliness. Touching it is the lankness of shrivelled age (Statue of an Old Woman). Here are expressed the violence of all sensation, the legitimate happiness of

love, the languor of satiety, the wantonness of riot, the solemnity of death, the hopeless horror of the damned ("La Porte de l'Enfer").

Rodin the man is unassuming, and his manners are almost naïve. In his *accueil* he is courteous and charming, extending a gracious reception to the world he generously permits to freely seek him. Below medium height, strongly, powerfully built, his head lionesque, his eyes keen, deep-set, and very brilliant, we see him when at work in the white long blouse he wears in his *atelier*, Rue de l'Université. The vast room is filled with groups completed and others in different stages of advancement, chiefly innumerable casts for the "Porte de l'Enfer." Around Rodin are his stone-cutters, achieving from blocks of marble the contours of the models in clay before their eyes. A fine, clinking sound, a "tin-tin," fills the place to echo as the penetrating instruments tap the hard surface. Rodin's hands are covered with wet and drying clay; the metallic sound is an accompaniment to his thoughts. "My *métier* is to express my ideas in plastic form; and, curiously, it is of form I think the least." (His enemiel will find here a *point d'appui* and fresh impetus to mirth!) "To me all expression should be subordinate to the

BUSTE DE MONS. RODIN, PAR FALGUIÈRE

idea ; and for the elusive, fleeting ideals I am on an eternal search. I may imagine that under my hands, as I mould a faun possibly, or a satyr, I have caught the ineffable conception fast at last ; when, under my very touch, I see the being change. My inspiration becomes another, and lo ! the clay is a faun no longer, but a Sappho—head thrown back, lips parted, plunging into a sea ! "

And to this man, the eternal search is for beauty, which, according to his creed, exists in everything that lives, moves, or has its being. " Nothing is ugly that has life," Rodin says. " Age has its own loveliness, as youth has its especial charm. Whatever suggests human emotion, whether of grief or pain, goodness or anger, hate or love, has its individual seal of beauty. Therefore," he exclaims, " since I hold all existence to be beautiful, and all beauty to be truth, *on a bien le droit de choisir parmi les choses vraies* " (one has the right to choose amongst truths). And although to Rodin has been attributed mastery in all arts save that in which he is absolutely *maître*, of his drawings, his designs, his ceramics, bear the touch of genius,—he is *par excellence* the sculptor. No critic can observe certain groups without conceding mastery to him in his art. It is

claimed that there exist in antiquity no more perfect examples of the human form than "L'Age d'Airain," "Le Printemps," and "Le Baiser." Had these marbles been unearthed at Samothrace or disinterred at Athens, antiquarians (if puzzled to trace the Grecian spirit) would scarcely have hesitated to assign these figures their places amongst the remnants of the dust and ashes of the Golden Age. But between Phidias and Rodin, between pure Greek and the complex modern, there is a great gulf fixed. The times demand, crave, insist upon and generate, another spirit. The ancients portrayed divinity in the mystic ideal clothed in ideal form; this modern portrays humanity, with its warring desires, its breath, span, happiness of love.

Rodin will be perhaps always misunderstood. He is a pagan, and in his art has been so varied as to make it difficult to judge him by a standard or to compare him wisely with his forerunners or his contemporaries. The same hand that has perfectly carved the lovely woman's head in "La Pensée," rounded the limbs in the delicacy of "The Eternal Idol," the same hand tears forth from clay and stone sinister, terrible conceptions, mighty symbols of desolation as on "La Porte de l'Enfer," the inevitable misery in the retribution. From a block of

marble he causes a woman to blossom forth like a flower, until rough block and figure appear of different materials —the one a cold, pulseless background, a sheath for a form so instinct with life that the stone has the texture of flesh, and seems to bloom and glow. Take, for example, the figure of Psyche holding back the draperies of night that she may see Eros. Rodin is an absolute expression of his times, a modern with the subtlety of idea, the suggestive conception that is the distinguishing mark of nineteenth-century talent, part of the spirit that has created the schools of symbolism, that has coined the term "degenerate"; and to this trend of mind, which no civilisation hitherto could have produced, has been added robust physical strength and an order of genius akin to that of the ancients, before whose immortal works Rodin is a humble and devout worshipper, and from whom, in his modesty, he thinks himself infinitely removed, and to whom he is in reality divinely allied.

PAUL ALBERT BESNARD

PAUL ALBERT BESNARD IN HIS STUDIO

# PAUL ALBERT BESNARD

PAUL ALBERT BESNARD bears no relation to any school. "I have never formed part of a group," he says; and in revenge or despair no group has formed itself around the master. There is, properly speaking, no Sargent school and no Whistler school, and may these men not be taken to be masters of the present time? It is a distinguishing peculiarity of modern art that schools do not form as they did in the old days. Possibly an explanation of the fact why there is little discipleship is that we are in the age of individualism and not of intense and imitative study. Each man and woman intends to be an *arriviste* without being a plodder and scholar. There is great pressure toward ultimate success; desire for originality. Imitation of methods and technique is not sympathetic. Above all there is a marked absence of the genius which carries men to the pinnacle Besnard has reached. Apprenticeship is not

to the taste of the modern student! Of people who put paint on canvas there are legion—of painters few —and in France, *Degas* and *Besnard* head the list.

Nothing would be more mistaken than to call Besnard an Impressionist, or to confound him with that school of art The word has been too freely used and misapplied. Besnard's art, in as far as possible, is the complete embodiment of his conception; the canvas when it leaves his hand—in as far as the painter is able to completely transmit his thought—is finished. Besnard does not pretend to flitting and intangible effects—to suggestive impressionism—he claims by his work to have expressed his idea, and does not trust to the public to interpret him or his inspiration—he has masterfully done so for himself.

The provinces, the Midi and the North have given to France most of her famous men; it is unusual for a Parisian born and bred to win distinction in his own city. It often seems to be a fact that the genius of the individual demands uprooting from his native soil —and that transplanting is salutary for development and success. Puvis de Chavannes was a Lyonnais, Ingres came from Montaubon, Rodin and Besnard are Parisians. This last named prophet found instanta-

CONVALESCENCE

neous honour in his own country. Besnard is a child of fortune; success came to him early, and he has no stories to relate of struggle and despair. Of the rough way to Fame he is ignorant, of the tortures which stimulated and deepened the experience of Rodin, of the long and painful route of Puvis de Chavannes to recognition Besnard knows nothing! He has no hardships to recount: one of the happy ones in the world of art, he is singularly devoid of history. He takes a calm and cheerful satisfaction in the facts of his successes, and is delighted to have no complaint to make of public or critics. "I began with success" (he says) "and it has never left me."

Besnard was born of a painting family, his father a pupil of Ingres and his mother a clever miniaturist. The boy was destined for Diplomacy, but with his talent for art his distaste for any other career rapidly declared itself. His parents acknowledged his predilection, and he entered the Beaux Arts. His master was the celebrated Brémond; and although Besnard claims never to have been an ardent student, and to have painted with freedom, following out his individual tastes and original inclinations, the strict academic influence of the schools, the system of Brémond,

himself a pupil of Ingres, is markedly evident in Besnard's technique. His *métier* has been thoroughly formed, his manner of painting arrived at through the close and laborious study in the school of that greatest master of modern painting—Ingres.

His *début* before the public was with a portrait called "La Femme Rose" about the year '68. This picture created an immediate effect upon the critic and public, and the artist, scarcely more than a boy, found himself the success of the moment. The following year he took the Prix de Rome, which recognition instead of coming to him—as it did to most of the student world—a stimulus and a reward, broke in—as it were—success upon success! In order to avail himself of the privilege, the prize offered, he was obliged to leave behind him the opening of a career already promising and to journey to Italy. The period of his Italian sojourn was neither productive nor important; and he afterwards made a stay in London, where he found himself sympathetic with English people and their art. He painted several portraits whilst in England, and amongst them those of Admiral Sir Redmond Cameron and Sir Bartle Frere.

The pictures exhibited at the Salons following his

THE SICK WOMAN

success with "La Femme Rose" were "L'homme qui court après la Fortune" and "Procession des Seigneurs de Voilans," a decorative bit of painting done, as is evident, in his extreme youth, full of movement and sincerity and novelty, and indicative of his power as future decorator. This picture is to-day on the walls of his studio in Paris.

Then followed "Une Source," "St. Benoit et Enfant," and a large canvas "Après la Défaite."

In 1883 a portrait called "La Femme jaune et bleue" caused an artistic furore and recalled the enthusiasm with which his *début* had been received a few years before. The picture was not a portrait, it was a study of lights. Besnard is not, strictly speaking, a portrait painter, and this production, "La Femme jaune et bleue," rather than the faithful transcription of a likeness, is the skilful, masterly treatment of a scheme. Never was Besnard able to reproduce for the people—who at once flocked to give him orders for portraits—the effects which had so strikingly won their notice. In the portrait of "La Femme jaune et bleue" he has insisted upon the effects of *deux rayons*—the light of an interior and the delicate illumination of the twilight entering from without. In this blending of tones, the

azure luminescence of twilight and the yellow lamplight, stands the woman's figure. The public to whom the picture was enthralling did not perhaps comprehend it was the rendering of an idea, the peculiar vision of Besnard, or understand that therein lay its distinction and that it was not a study of portraiture.

Then may be mentioned Besnard's celebrated "Poneys harcellés par les mouches." No one who has seen the two young horses in their stalls forgets this live and graceful picture, with its animation and *verve*, its interesting anatomical study and the treatment of colour and tone. The animals are admirably drawn and the blue and crimson and violet of the scheme are Besnard's own. This bold and eccentric production added much to the reputation of the painter and was one of the most remarked pictures at the Chicago Exposition. It is now owned by the Count Rajinski (Russia) and is a veritable *chef d'œuvre*.

Besnard has also another equine group called "Le Marché des chevaux en Algérie," now in the possession of the Baron Franchetti.

A list of the most celebrated of Besnard's pictures is more or less complete as follows:

The frescoes in the Sorbonne.

LA FEMME QUI SE CHAUFFE

" La Vie renaissante et la Mort."

Fresco in the Hôtel de Ville, "l'Apothéose de la Lumière."

Fresco in the Ecole de Pharmacie.

Frescoes in the Hospital for Poor Children at Berck.

Portrait of Réjane.

Portrait of the Princess Mathilde.

Portrait of his family.

Portrait of his wife.

The last four are in his own possession.

" Couché du soleil sur le bord d'Algérie." Luxembourg.

" La Mort." Luxembourg.

" Femme qui se chauffe." Luxembourg.

" Entre deux rayons." Luxembourg.

" La Féerie Intime." Russia.

" L'Ile heureuse"—in the possession of Mr. Henschel.

At the present date Monsieur Martignac, Paris, possesses several splendid canvases of Besnard's, notably " l'Espagnole," " Le Regard," " l'Automne " and " La Femme de Biarritz."

In America the purchasers of Besnard have been few.

One of the most interesting of his paintings is at Baltimore, in Mr. George Vanderbilt's collection.

Paris, appreciative of her distinguished son, has confided to him the most important of the decorations now under the city's consideration—the ceiling of the Théâtre Français and the cupola of the Petit Palais. Let the amateur of art, whose list is already long, add these mural decorations which are now in process of construction, and it will be seen that the art of interior painting is not extinct in France, and that these tasks have been happily consigned to the man best fitted at present to perform them.

Besnard is at present engaged upon the ceiling of the Théâtre Français. Its dimensions are vast, covering a surface of 273 metres. His subject, already composed in miniature, is as follows:

The god Apollo, in his chariot, draws his horses back on their haunches whilst he salutes the great masters of drama—Corneille, Racine, Molière, Victor Hugo, all of whom are seated at the top of a flight of temple steps. Behind the god are a group of the Hours, and in front, the Muses. On the last step of the temple is a charming group and distinctive of Besnard. The female figure of Time reposes against

DEATH

another figure representing Truth—a most subtle and agreeable image.

The cupola of the Petit Palais is divided into four panels, and Besnard's intention is to represent in his paintings the city of Paris in four different conceptions —" Paris Hospitalière," " Paris dans son Art," " Paris dans le Commerce," and " Paris dans les Industries."

For the St. Louis Exposition in the United States Besnard has sent a frieze covering 760 metres, entirely surrounding the walls of the Exposition Française. In this building will also be seen by the tourists there " l'Ile heureuse."

For the more minute consideration of Besnard's works it is well to begin with the decorations in the Ecole de Pharmacie where the walls of the corridor entrance to this School are entirely covered with his decorations. The order was given in 1883 and fulfilled in 1888. Here Besnard has given a series of fresh and delicate *plein air* frescoes done upon the walls themselves. As they are without protection—regrettably —they are being marked by the vandal pencils of the sightseer and the students. To the right, the first panel represents the open fields where peasants and women gather the medical herbs. In another panel

follows the sorting of the herbs in the laboratory; the third is the laboratory itself with the distillation of the medicines. Then comes a line of landscapes just above over the woodwork of the wall like a dado. The first is the serious, meditative scientist in the balcony of his house, overlooking the river and the city. Alongside this are several landscapes of a peculiarly gentle and attractive charm. At the end of the hall are again four large frescoes, the forest where the chemists and the botanists are engaged in their researches—the lecture room and the geologist amongst the rocks. On the opposite wall is the companion series of oblong panels whose subjects have become so well known to the connoisseur: Dawn on a primæval sea where up from the waves prehistoric creatures rise weird and appalling; a group of sea-horses emerging from the waters; a troop of mastodons, and lastly primitive man and woman disporting on the shores of an ancient sea whose waves to-day are confined in some strata of rock to be found by the geologist's tool.

On the left, at the entrance door, are the most beautiful of the series of decorations. These are life size. One is "La Malade," a sick girl in her bed, surrounded by the mother, the nurse and the physician.

A PORTRAIT IN YELLOW AND BLUE

The companion piece is "The Convalescence," and is undoubtedly one of Besnard's *chefs d'œuvre*. The invalid, after her long and weary confinement, is being supported by tender arms into the sunlight; and it would be difficult to imagine a more expressive and suggestive subject for these walls. The picture is full of sunlight and mysterious half-tones, and is expressive of tenderness and sympathy and encouragement. In fact, these frescoes possess in a large degree the essentials of good decoration—simplicity of line—bold and correct drawing—impressive human sentiment and impressive subject.

Again and notably, in the decorations of the Salle des Mariages in the Mairie du Louvre the subtlety of Besnard's treatment of his task, the upleading and inspiring effect he has produced makes well worth a special description of these pictures. It will appear impossible to the dogmatic mind that a secular room, in a Republican Mayor's office, can suggest an atmosphere of sacred beauty. This, however, has been rendered the case by the decorations with which Besnard has beautified this square, dark, conservative apartment. As one enters the apartment where civil marriages are performed in this particular quarter

of Paris the eyes find on the wall opposite the door a graceful and agreeable picture of youthful love. The girl—an exquisite figure—is surrounded by flying birds and young doves. She is seated on a bank of flowers and above her a youth of age as tender as her own waves a branch of spring flowers. From this, one seeks the side wall and a large panel of bright and glowing colour. The subject is harvest time, and the fields are heavy with their burden of grain. On a sheaf of golden wheat is the figure of a woman, mature now although still young, and at her breast a child. Two other children play about her, and alongside the husband's strong, vigorous figure wrestles with his refractory horse. This decoration, purely pastellic in impression, is so soft and plastic that the clear colour seems ready to come off at the touch. It is peculiarly velvet-like in quality and very high in tone. Already this square, unbeautiful room with its green-covered benches has altered in character. The greatest forces of the world, the greatest beauty of the world, have penetrated it through these interpretations of a master. But it is not to the exuberant and lovely expressions of life that the man and woman who come here to the Maire's office

THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

to be joined in wedlock, turn, or on which—from the very position of the picture—their eyes are forced to rest. Directly over the official desk—directly over the entrance door—is the third decoration of the suite. In the frailest tone, if this word may be employed, in the most mysterious medium, he has painted a winter scene. To the left a little row of skeleton trees range in nude, chaste bareness; in the far distance is the lonely outline of a ruined tower. Close together—at the top of a long line of stone steps—are seated a man and woman. Age has claimed them; they are old. But the woman still leans upon the man. What this fresco portrays of union, of inseparableness, of devotion, is not easy to express in words. There is no hint of melancholy in this winter scene, in this study of old age which Besnard has seen fit to accentuate, which he has chosen for his principal panel, and on which the newly married couple must meditate. It is the beautiful apotheosis of wedded love daringly looking beyond youth to the serene beauty of life's decline. The frescoes were done in 1898. They are drawn at once with freedom and precision, and are excellent examples of the best modern mural art.

The subject painted on the arch of the Amphi-

théatre de Chimie, La Sorbonne, is highly imaginative. Besnard has called it "La Vie renaissante de la Mort." It consists of three large panels. In the centre panel, thrown on a bank of yellow herbage, is the body of a woman, at her breast a nursing infant. From the other breast a stream of milk flows forth, gaining in dimensions until it swells to a river of life. Around her mouth cluster a horde of butterflies, the disseminators of germs. A serpent, symbolising generation, makes his way slowly toward the woman. The right panel represents figures of Adam and Eve. Adam carries the young and lovely figure of the mother of life downward toward a river flowing past the portals of Eden. Her hand is outstretched toward the golden apples of an overhanging tree. Together the couple descend toward the river which supposedly carries on its breast the *débris* of plants and offscum of the earth, and loses itself in the earth again. At the left a mighty chasm charged with fire represents a crucible purifying and revivifying and reconstructing. Thus Besnard has chosen to symbolise the forces of nature—Water, Air, Earth, Fire. The principles of organic chemistry—creatures of flora, fauna and animal life under the solar influence.

SUNSET, ALGERIA

It is a singular and bold conception, magnificently drawn and pastel-like in treatment.

The Musée du Luxembourg is especially rich in the artist's works, and the buyers for the State have shown wisdom and penetration in their choice. In one of the rooms is a small canvas not over 18 by 6 inches. It recalls in character and distinction the little picture of Gambetta's room done by Cazin, and it is only the great masters who thus wonderfully fill small bits of canvas with whole histories of life. Besnard has called his study " La Mort "—a miserable little mansard room *au sixième* in a third-class hotel—the meagre furnishings are a chair, table, and iron bed on which lies the dead figure of a woman. At the door the voluble *concierge*, half curious and half touched, ushers in a young man, no doubt the lover of the wretched creature beyond all the questions of life; the man is in evening dress, hat in his hand. Here we have poverty, misery, debauch, disgrace and despair in a medallion, as it were. The composition and the treatment recall no one but Besnard himself, but the literary quality of the picture suggests Hogarth series, and Tolstoi and Balzac. This affinity with a sister art is now and then interestingly observed in the narrative pictures of the great masters.

"Entre Deux Rayons" is the so-called portrait of a woman. Again the effect of two lights is here accentuated. The canvas is full of light and seems positively to radiate. The tones are red and yellow, warm and iridescent, and the flesh of the arms and neck melt into the scheme of the drapery. The picture is a marvel of delicate beauty and technique. (1893.)

But surpassing all the pictures in this Museum, in the same room, on a considerably larger canvas, is "La Femme qui se chauffe," the nude figure of a woman crouching before a fire whose existence is only evinced by the play of its reflections upon her flesh. From a little cup of blue and white china she is drinking a draught, evidently warm and delicious, to judge from her attitude, which is expressive of entire comfort and *bien être.* The work, in point of view of modelling and drawing, is absolute perfection. This treatment of the nude has the strength and power of marble with the addition of colour. In none of Besnard's paintings is the luminous quality more striking. There is in it an opalescence and vibration, it possesses the softness of old paintings, and alone in a gallery of masterpieces would give Besnard the right to first rank. The scheme of "La Femme qui se chauffe" is blue and yellow, the

HORSES TORMENTED BY FLIES

background a penumbra of azure, from which the brilliant figure of the woman comes dazzlingly forth.

The pictures in the possession of Monsieur Martignac deserve note. "Le Sourire," painted in 1895, is a portrait of merit and perhaps particularly interesting because uncharacteristic of Besnard. It is successful as a study of dark, more sombre tones, and has many of the characteristics of Dutch painting.

"L'Automne," again, is a study low in tone, and Besnard has left his type (distinctly the blonde woman) to paint a dark creature through whose loosened hair fall a shower of autumn leaves. This picture is a veritable phantom of a season past. There is an Algerienne in this collection, interesting because it is yet another treatment of Besnard's famous "Deux Rayons." The Eastern woman is seated in the window of the booth, and blending with the room's light is that light from the long Eastern street which seems actually to enter her room at the threshold of her booth.

In 1893, Mr. James Sutton, of New York, ordered from Martignac forty Besnards to be sent to America. His name was then scarcely known in the United States. Many of the canvases found instant appreciation. One beautiful portrait called "La Pensive," in

the possession of Monsieur Martignac, is especially worthy of mention. Here Besnard is faithful to his type—a blonde woman with brilliant head of copper-coloured hair. She leans a little forward with her chin on her clasped hands. Her dress is of yellow satin and old lace, in her hands two great pink roses. The scheme of the picture is yellow with a single delicate pink note. The hair, the flesh, and the texture of the satin and the lace are all repetitions and repetitions, all insistences of the yellow tone.

"La Femme de Biarritz"—Martignac—one of Besnard's late paintings, is very beautiful indeed. The model is a woman of warm, voluptuous type, revealing the characteristics of the Basque. This picture was painted when Besnard was in Biarritz, where he had gone for the health of one of his children.

Monsieur Martignac has several examples of Besnard's pastels, and curiously enough the more delicate treatment that his canvases in oil display is absent in these pastels, whose colours are so vivid as to be almost blatant; but they are splendid achievements, and Besnard is the first pastellist in France. Some of his most successful works in this medium are in the possession of Dr. Delbet, of Paris.

LOVE

Besnard's personality recalls that of his distinguished countryman, Rodin. He has the same strong, vigorous physique, the same air of power, but these two great masters in temperament and in life and experience are the antipodes. Besnard is not a recluse ; he is, on the contrary, a man of the world, very domestic too, and absorbed in his family and his home. His hotel and studios are a little removed from the centre of Parisian turmoil. He entertains and receives a great deal and has a large circle of acquaintances and friends. In order to control as much land as possible and to construct larger workshops, he has bought extensively around his house. In one studio are the projected designs for the Théâtre Français, in another the new portrait of his wife, a full-sized figure of a woman of middle age, her hair is snow white, her dress sumptuous black velvet, and she holds a yellow-covered novel in her hands. This was exhibited at last year's Salon and is the most realistic of all Besnard's paintings.

There is an interesting portrait in this same studio of the Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, who died this winter, and whose salons have been famous for the last half-century. The Princess is seated at a table by a

green lamp, in the position and environment so well known to men and women of letters.

On these walls also hang the celebrated picture of the painter's family, painted about twenty years ago, a group of red-cheeked children and their mother.

In this large, agreeable room, Besnard paints from models and statues, makes his designs and drawings, his etchings, his sketches and his pastels. But upstairs at the top of his house (whose walls are rich with their friezes of designs) is an elaborate studio particularly designed for posers for portraits. This sumptuous apartment—furnished in the most luxurious manner—suggests a drawing-room and not a studio at all. Rich screens of Chinese and Japanese workmanship, paintings by the old masters (none of his work is here), objects and *bibelots* and treasures of art adorn the apartment. The chimney-piece is interesting as an example of Besnard's taste for plastic art. It is set in panels of stained glass, and around the fender are coiled a pair of gigantic boa-constrictors made in plaster and afterwards painted. The effect is picturesque, terrifying and peculiar, and is the work of the artist himself.

This room boasts the black-and-gold cabinet which

THE FLIRTATION

figured in "La Féerie intime." The picture, as will be remembered, is the nude figure of a young woman ensconced in a great armchair. The garments she has just quitted softly surround her. The brilliant and dazzling effect of the painting is in the meshes of her spangled dress blazing with reflected light, and from the gold that gleams and glitters is the lacquer of the Chinese cabinet. The whole picture is a glow of gold and fire, and in this luscent envelope the woman muses and dreams. This picture is in Russia, as are many of Besnard's canvases. Many critics and painters class this picture as the finest example of modern art.

It would not be complete to close the study of Besnard without mention of his etchings. Here and there a dealer may have a complete set of the few produced, but they are few indeed, and difficult to obtain. The most celebrated is known as "La Femme." In this series Besnard has drawn woman in every stage of her existence. We have the flirt, the mistress, the wife, the happy mother with her children, the miserable mother, who to cover the form of her freezing child denudes herself, and at length casts her body over her son; the woman of the ball-room, the woman of the streets, and, in short, he has seen fit to

display every state and condition of femininity in this study of black and white.

There also is a weird and eccentric suite, designated as "La Mort." In these studies Besnard has indeed played with his conception, ringing its changes to endless and infinite variety. Death, the skeleton, pursues his prey in every imaginable state of society—in the streets, in the crowd, to the lonely individual, to the lovers' embrace, to the man and wife before the altar, he lurks behind a pillar to seize the solitary passer-by, he appears in the ball-room, jogging elbows with the *débutante* he rescues the beggar and menaces the rich man. Here in these drawings the painter displays his first and only hint of morbidness. The idea of death, he says, has always been with him an obsession. Whistler's etchings are alone to be mentioned in class with these admirable *eaux-fortes*.

Besnard himself explains the absence of the melancholy strain which is, as a rule, strongly underlying the work of all great genius.

"I never work when I am unhappy. Unhappiness has a most depressing effect upon my execution and my conception. Never in times of anxiety have I said, 'I will turn to my work, I will lose myself in my crea-

tions. When my child was ill I was utterly incapable of producing, and only when its recovery was certain

A WOMAN OF BIARRITZ

could I undertake my work again. (And it is at the hospital for sick children at Berck, when he was there for the health of his child, that he painted his frescoes.)

vibration that I see and feel in nature." (He has chosen his definition happily, vibration is a distinct quality of his work). "I am really glad you do not think I represent a school! I feel myself a solitary as far as my art goes. . . . I love motion, and action, and variety, and yet withal I am a dreamer, completely lost in my conception and in my mental preparation for my work. For this reason, perhaps because I am so constantly absorbed in the world of imagination, my taste in literature is for modern things—for immediate things, if I may so say. I rise at seven in the morning, and am at work at nine. I paint until luncheon, and rarely do good work in the afternoons. I take my inspirations, the ideas for my pictures, from everything that surrounds me. I cannot tell from where they come, but I am always seeking to accurately arrange my ideas and render my conceptions and my translations of them harmonious."

In the summer Besnard goes to Savoie, where in the long vacations he does almost no work, repairing his forces, resting and giving himself to the enjoyment of his tranquil, domestic life. "I think I may say that I love light above all things."

And in no modern paintings is the luminous quality

more evident. Certain of his paintings possess the mellowness of the Dutch school. There is a likeness to Rubens in his treatment of flesh, in the exuberance and splendid animalism of his women, whereas in the half-tones and sombre scheme (take, for instance, "Le Regard"), Franz Hals and Porbus are recalled. Light is his motive in the ceiling of the Hôtel de Ville. It radiates in the crucible of fire in the Sorbonne ceiling, whilst the decoration of the Français, Apollo the Sun god, again repeats the insistent idea. Besnard's predilection for prismatic, dazzling effect is unique; a special sense for colour combined with magnificent technique and accurate drawing, explain the power of his painting and his high rank in the criticism of the present.

Besnard is in the vigorous prime of his life and production. His redundant creative force is enormous and he will, it is to be hoped and believed, abundantly add to France's treasures of modern art.

# STEINLEN

# STEINLEN

ONE cannot think of Steinlen, Willette, Guillaume, Rivière, Léandre, and their colleagues in the same school, without having before one's eyes an image of the multi-populous, seething quarter of Paris wherein these clever nineteenth-century seers and priests of a certain cult lived and moved, without remembering Montmartre, and the famous cabaret *Le Chat Noir*, once on the Boulevard Rochechouart.

The Chat Noir was founded by Rodolphe Salis in 1882. This artistic tavern saw Caran d'Ache's *début:* his silhouettes of Napoleon and the Grand Armée did much to make the place popular. Willette here presented his fascinating musical stories of *Pierrot—Histoires sans Paroles.* The Shadow Pantomime of Henri Rivière was also a celebrated contribution to the little Bohemian theatre.

The Chat Noir has succumbed to the law of progress

that sweeps pitilessly before its scythe whatsoever would hinder its course. The delicious little plays appealing to the ready appreciation of the Faubourg Montmartrois, as well as to the keenest critics,—pantomimes of ephemeral beauty, extraordinary shows and shadow dances,—find no longer this stage waiting to extend its hospitality for their interpretation. It has no successor. A multitude of little people—feeble flames—were snuffed out as the Chat Noir closed its doors for ever. But there were those to whom the Café was only an ante-chamber to larger rooms; and among these men Steinlen is conspicuous.

The various quarters of Paris are magnets, drawing inevitably unto them those spirits who shall understand, who shall find their ways sympathetic, who shall become their poets, historians, painters.

The sensitive Boutet de Monvel reveals the Champs-Elysées, the Bois de Boulogne, the parks, the communal schools, and the gardens; for this painter of children seeks only the reposeful ways where children go, where they study, are led, carried, or wander safely alone.

In Belleville, Geoffroy has been responsive to benevolence and charity from man to man. He presents the Foundling Schools, the Asylums. The

STREET CHILDREN

soothing atmosphere of charity envelops his work—he has seen the poor through the medium of philanthropic faith. Daumier, the father of personal caricature, sixty years ago regarded Paris with the philosopher's eyes. Gavarni looked through the single eyeglass of the man of fashion, as it were, on the petty vanities of the gay social world.

And Steinlen ?

He is "a lover of life," "an adorer of truth." In his youth, even, surrounded by the wild *jeunesse* of the student quarter, his spirit was calmer, profounder than the others. Montmartre became the magnet drawing to its centre this ardent soul ; in Montmartre, then, as to-day, he saw the Giant Need, imperfectly met by the vast charity of the world. It is from this district that his eternal plea resounds for the poor whose necessities are eternal. He finds his quarter tragic in its commonplace moods ; to him the passions of the people have spoken. There is vibrant and touching pathos in his rendering of the love-story of the grisettes, the love-story of the workman and workwoman of the people, an infinite tenderness in his pictures of humble family life—the gathering of the sad little bands enveloped by the fervour of maternity, when the frail mother, bending over

her children, has more love to give than bread. And if, as we study and consider his work, we are shocked at times, and claim that the truth is unpleasing—is this not because his subjects are sought among those phases of life to which too often we willingly close our eyes?

Steinlen is a Swiss Protestant of simple parentage. He was born in Lausanne, and is Parisian by adoption only. His grandfather was a painter of talent. Save for the fact that Steinlen married at twenty and came to Paris to earn his bread with his brush and pencil, his history has no special interest. He had no time or chance to follow the academic course of study in the *ateliers* of Paris. In order to meet his responsibilities, he had to make money, and at once. He therefore turned his talent to every use.

"I made designs for wall-paper," he says, "for cotton stuffs, even,—to say nothing of illustrations for booksellers and book-writers, and for song-writers."

Some of his most important work has been done through the medium of a newspaper. During the years 1891-92 *Gil Blas* printed all the drawings Steinlen could finish. He laboured with energy almost ferocious, under the pressing need of means for daily existence. The result was the finest. It is not too much to state

MOTHER'S LOVE

that this work of Steinlen's in *Gil Blas* helped to revolutionise illustrative art in the periodicals of France.

He gave to the accomplishment of his editor's orders his best effort, and filled during nearly two years the weekly pages, not for the amusement of his public, but for their awakening to the interest in the life of Paris as seen in the Faubourgs. Awaken and instruct he did. He made a call upon sympathy, and stirred and stimulated charity; but also his art was an epoch in illustrative journalism.

Public and editors demanded thenceforth more than the inadequate drawings of mediocrity, and solicited sketches from the best pencils. The modern French weeklies exhibit the cleverest possible illustrations, forming in their class the highest grade.

Frontispiece and other drawings in *Le Rire* and *Gil Blas* to-day by Jean Veber, Léandre, Willette, are delights to the collector, and any one possessing the years containing Steinlen's contributions to these papers is considered fortunate.

For the most part the illustrations in *Gil Blas* are coloured. They are satires on life drawn to accompany some "*Saut d'esprit*" or to portray simply street scenes

as Steinlen knows them, or are political cartoons. In his street studies he has been relentless in his realism, careless of how unpleasant may be the impression of these frankly told horrors. No detail of sordid existence has been neglected in his bold depicting of the city's misery.

Needless to say how admirable is the technique in these sketches, the fresh vigorous work of a man whose spirit alone was in the subject, whose ambition chafed for the leisure to create in what to him was the great province of art, the picture, the oil-painting.

It was in the early part of his career that he added to the glory of the modern poster. Artists of distinction in London and Paris have not hesitated to employ their talent in street-wall decoration. In France, Steinlen has many rivals amongst favourite painters of the day, most notably Léandre, Willette, Cheret. But the Steinlen posters have not been surpassed nor superseded. They are immensely popular, peculiarly happy.

It is scarcely necessary to recall "*Lait Pur Sterilisé*," the enormous poster of world-wide popularity; it is universally known—there was a craze for it in Paris and in New York—of its type it is perfection. The subject is a dear little girl, red-haired, red-robed, seated before

A STEINLEN POSTER

a table drinking a bowl of milk, under the jealous eyes of three great cats. The child is Steinlen's little daughter, and the drawing of child and cats is as skilful and clever as it well can be.

There are several charming *affiches* especially designed for Sarah Bernhardt—others for Yvette Guilbert. Chiefest of these is the famous Café des Ambassadeurs. Steinlen made in this a striking portrait of the original *café chanteuse*; and Yvette,—slender, lithe, enchanting, as Paris and the world has found her,—boasts no more characteristic portrait of herself than the Steinlen poster.

Advertisements for Vernet les Bains, Trouville, the posters Mothu, Doria, and lastly Le Rêve—may be mentioned as important. They are all difficult to obtain.

These studies, for a purpose of necessity transient, destined to be transmitted to paper and pasted along street walls by a bill-poster's brush, constructed to catch the crowd's attention in order that their mission should be fulfilled—are neither vulgar nor sensational. Vigorous, strong, they are worthy the word Steinlen applies to his other work—"*Serious.*" They are done with his characteristic splendid stroke. Their colouring is

brilliant, crude and boldly frank the drawing. Steinlen's stroke is celebrated : eminently fearless, rapid, trenchant. It has been cleverly said that in each of his creations the *trait marquant* is so deeply emphasised, the one idea is so imposed, that it is as though when his work were done he drew below it one dark black line. In his studio may be seen a wall-decoration destined rather for a *café* than for a poster—a study of the streets, a bit of the passing crowd, taken out, as it were, and held before us. Steinlen has renounced this branch of popular decoration. His posters are already rare, and are becoming yearly more valuable.

Steinlen has done an immense amount of illustrating. Many volumes of François Coppée, Anatole France, and Guy de Maupassant are made doubly attractive by his collaboration. He has illustrated the songs of Bruant and Jouy, of Montmartre and student fame. Among some of the publications valuable chiefly because Steinlen has collaborated with the writers may be mentioned "Chanson d'Aïeules" (Tellier, Paris); "Chanson des Cabots" (Guetville); and "Chanson Rouge" (Boukay).

These illustrations number, amongst other subjects, "The Chief of the Claque," "The Cabotins of Paris,"

WORK-GIRLS

"The Souffleurs of the Theatre," "The Director of the Theatre Himself." Each little picture is gay, familiar, intelligent, finely conceived and finely drawn. For a song dedicated to Alphonse Daudet he has a strong study of symbolic misery: a nude creature kneeling in the middle of a deserted street, arms outspread ready to clutch her prey, who is the passer-by. In the same book we have "The Knifegrinder," "The Needlewoman," "The Wine-seller." Paris seems to have given up her hetacomb of human souls and human bodies for his observation and portrayal. In the drawing for a book of Coppée's is "The *Gamin* of Paris," a little half elf creature, half human child. This ghoul, seated on a mass of refuse, is red-eyed and horrible in his misery. He typifies Belleville, the Whitechapel of Paris. He is the accrued poverty, squalor, and criminal tendencies of generations combined with the frailty of childhood, the slenderness of youth. The subject is powerful, the workmanship excellent.

The best of his illustrations have been made for Edouard Pelletan, the publisher in the Boulevard St. Germain. M. Pelletan has conceived the idea of bringing out a yearly publication called *L'Almanach du*

*Bibliophile.* Jules Claretie, Anatole France, Gustave Larroumet, and Sully Prud'homme, have collaborated to write a series of articles. But Steinlen is the feature of the publication. Monsieur Pelletan asked him to make a dozen drawings whose headings should be the twelve months of the year, the general subject to be the glorification of Labour. But Steinlen grew enthusiastic over his task, and drew many more than the twelve studies. A collection of the designs was on exhibition in Monsieur Pelletan's library during 1901.

These pictures—for they are not studies, but admirably finished creations—represent the working man and the working woman in the pursuit of their various occupations. We see the *blanchisseuse* stagger home through the drizzling mist, bowed under her huge burden of linen. On the skeleton scaffolding the builder becomes a speck, infinitely far from his fellows; the apprentice goes chattering gaily along with her companions,—again we have the attractive girl of the people, whose class in France is distinct, and whose personality is so agreeable. Steinlen touches with his happiest, lightest stroke the gay figure of youth and charm.

Another drawing portrays the family again around

DRY-POINT ETCHING

the humble board. But the finest of the suite are four pictures drawn at Monsieur Pelletan's suggestion that Steinlen should show the public what his skill was in careful, minute technique ; for the critics have accused him of too great facility and too rapid production. He has called the first picture " Le Bois," where a carpenter, a strong, well-drawn figure, nude to the waist, bends over the rough planks of wood, yielding in long curling shavings to his plane. In the second, " La Pierre," the stone-polisher crouches over his well-nigh implacable mass of stone, until he may almost distinguish his image in the smooth surface. In the third, " Le Fer," a like half-nude labourer struggles with his contortion of the mighty mineral. Lastly, Steinlin has depicted the miner, deep in his cavern's interior.

These studies demand a first place in the catalogue of modern drawing, and lack in the perfected workmanship none of Steinlen's distinctive, free, untrammelled handling of his subject and expression of his art. They would not lose, placed side by side with the drawings of Puvis, and indeed possess the primitive purity of line and reveal the serious conception which mark the work of masters.

Pelletan has just published Anatole France's new

book "L'Affaire Crainquebille," a satire on French law and modes of justice, done in Anatole France's most delightful manner, and illustrated by Steinlen.

Crainquebille, a seller of turnips, which he pushes through the streets in a little hand-cart, is accused of having called out to a policeman "*Mort aux Vaches!*" —a slang opprobium of the streets. The poor innocent, unconscious of offending, is haled to the courts, where he becomes the victim of a most amusing and witty *procès*, withal tragically pathetic. He is condemned to prison, and when once more at liberty attempts to resume his ancient, respectable calling. He finds himself a pariah, shunned because of the stigma of "jail-bird!" Crainquebille falls into abject poverty and inebriation. In his starving misery he reflects, "Prison isn't half a bad place, after all!" and to partake once more of its peace he sins deliberately. Bearding the policeman in his den—that is, the street lamp's shadow—he cries out to him, "*Mort aux Vaches!*" But the amiable officer, "un bon père de famille," laughs at the old man and bids him go about his business. The poor old Crainquebille finds the justice of the world too intricate to comprehend. Imprisoned for a fault which when repeated evokes

LES AFFICHES ILLUSTRÉES

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A STEINLEN POSTER

mirth! He disappears in the fogs of a winter street.

This collaboration of Anatole France and Steinlen is *spirituel* and successful. "Once more Steinlen was quite carried away" (Monsieur Pelletan says); "I suggested twenty drawings. He has given me fifty-five!" And each illustration is a little masterpiece, admirable in execution and full of sympathy with the class the downtrodden Crainquebille represents.

It is false to suppose that Steinlen does not give to each of his creations the greatest pains. For the little volume called "Le Chien de Brisquet" * he made eighty drawings for Anatole France before he got one to his satisfaction, and it was for "Le Chien de Brisquet," which volume of drawings it will be difficult to surpass, that Steinlen drew and re-drew his canine sketches. "Although," said Monsieur Pelletan, "I assure you *I* was quite satisfied with the first drawings!"

A word must be said regarding his feline studies. Cats have been favourite animals with poets and painters: witness Baudelaire, Poe, Coppée, Manet; and Steinlen, too, has found these slender, graceful

* Chez Pelletan.

felines interesting. There is in his representation of this animal a subtle perceiving of the link and of the difference between the brute and the human. It suggests the masters whose paintings of animals have made them famous, Landseer above all. When his book "Le Chat" came out, it was bought at first for children, but could not long be kept in the nurseries. Copies were pilfered for drawing-rooms and studios, where elders claimed these treasures of clever design. Steinlen's host of drawings are undoubted indications of a power not to be confined in the sphere of the illustration for books. Admirers of Steinlen's look for great things of him during the next years, claiming that his future is more brilliant in promise than any of his colleagues, Jean Veber excepted.

Steinlen himself is a delightful personality, and distinctly a force. The grasp of his hand, the fire of his eye, his courtesy, charm, and the pleasure it is to hear him speak, render him an unusual companion. His friends, naturally, are legion—he is much beloved; but, as they say in France, he is *très sauvage*—preferring to let the world go its ways, and to shut himself away with his work in his remote studio.

His intimate contact with the very poor, the very

Paris. LE CLAVECIN. Societe Anonyme d'Edition. 35. Rue d'Hauteville
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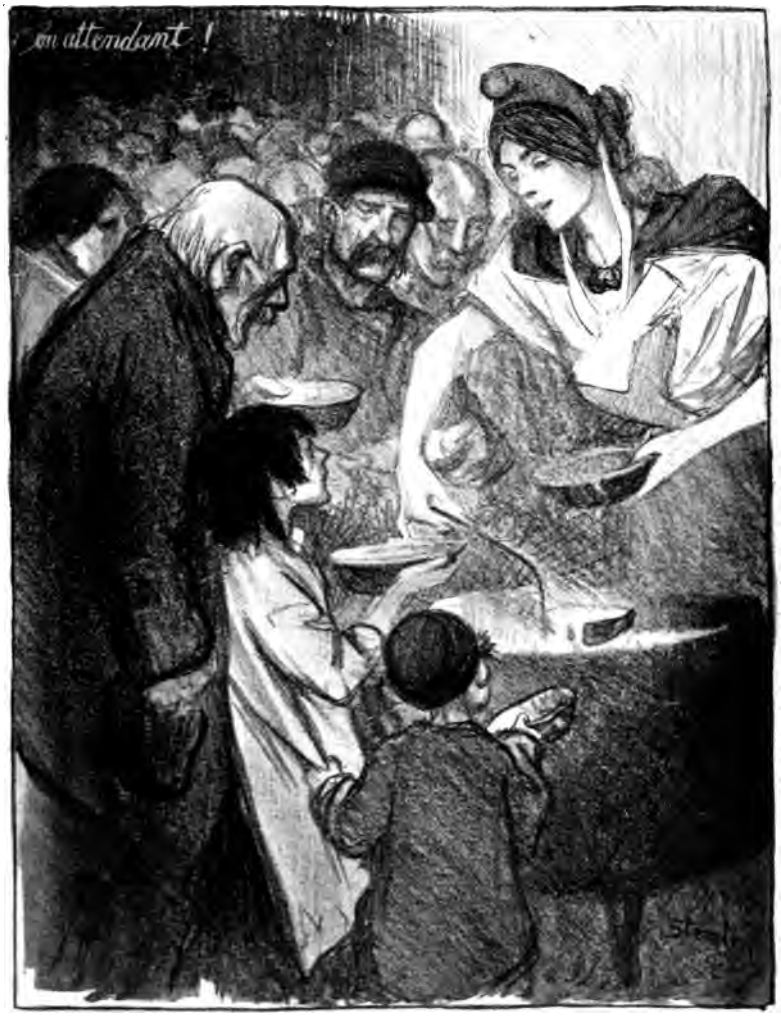
A STEINLEN POSTER

suffering, has formed his points of view and left its mark on his nature. He is a Bohemian, and values slightly luxuries and ways of modern worldly life. He is familiar with the haunts of the thieves in the dangerous parts of Paris : he may well take his life in his hands—he is beloved and known, he is safe. He knows the interiors where starvation and cold and crime are side by side. He has helped generously, who can say how many? directly from his own purse and indirectly through the wide sympathy he has aroused.

No peculiarities of the fluctuating mass which is the very life of the city, which is the agglomerate expression of pleasure, pain, vice, crime, good, evil, sadness, joy, are lost upon Steinlen. He seems to be *en rapport* with those people whom we call our brothers and treat as our inferiors and our enemies. The tricks, the attitudes, the expressions, the behaviour of the passers-by are familiar to him. With a few clever strokes of brush or pencil he has given us the *piquante ouvrière*, the modest apprentice, in a graceful, unconscious pose as she poises on her hip the hat-box she is carrying to a customer. In this *jeune fille* representative, in the toss of her head, the curve of her arm, the swish of her neat skirts high

above her well-shod feet, in this jaunty creature, scrupulous as to tidiness, is a certain phase of Paris drawn with crystalline distinctness. This girl of the people is dangerous, charming, and to her the boulevardier is an enemy. Paris is epitomised by this one flaring street-wall decoration. So much for the *jeunesse*, gay, laborious, and generally self-respecting. We do not often see Steinlen so gay.

In his studio in the Rue Caulaincourt, walking to and fro, he converses delightfully with his friends. He is a workman, his muscular hands are full of force, his build powerful, although he is compact and small. He suggests endurance, and the patience that is the result of hand-to-hand tussle with existence, and tender understanding of the needs of one's neighbour. His eyes are keen, penetrating, and kind, his features strong. He has a golden voice, as the French say, caressing and indolent. Its measured cadence, its slow, agreeable flow contrasts strongly with the man himself. He wears the coarse velveteens of the labourer, cuffs close around his muscular wrists. His trousers are voluminous, and on his feet flap loose Indian slippers. His appearance, and the fact that his studio is in one of the poorest quarters of Paris, his whole attitude and life, suggest, not a




EN ATTENDANT

scorn of material things, but a perfect ability to forego them.

The studio is a workshop first of all ; it is free from would-be artistic decorations, full of canvases and folios of drawings. He has his own lithographic stones, and does his own printing, holding this as an art important, as do many of the moderns ; and he, as well as many another modern, insists on the expediency of making his own colours.

Steinlen thinks unfavourably of academies and salons, " where," he says, " in order to exhibit at stated periods the artists paint anything and everything under rush and stress." He sends to no public collections. When a goodly number of studies have accumulated in his studio, he organises a little *exposition* of his own, and the admirers of his work have an opportunity to visit a Steinlen exhibition in the autumn, when he will delight, charm, and touch the public as he has never hitherto failed to do.

At this period of his life—and he is still young—he finds the insistent needs of daily existence are met ; and he draws, as it were, a sigh of relief, and turns toward what is his recreation, because a beloved labour, and the goal of his career, painting in oil. Steinlen bemoans

the fact that he lacks the prescribed technicalities an academic education would have given to him ; but this fact has left him a freedom from rules which, in spite of their immense importance, are often trammels to individuality. At all events the daring boldness of his stroke, and his perfect originality, have been developed with no hindrance. Need has been his spur, talent the response to the goad.

Possibly Steinlen is nowhere better displayed than in a certain canvas at present in his studio in the Rue Caulaincourt. It is a life-size oil painting, a study of a man and woman in the working class. It is evidently the end of the day, and the scene a nook or corner in some room so distant from the rooms we all know that it is hard even to imagine where it may be. The workman has taken the young creature in his arms for a long embrace. His head is bent over her, and she looks out from the picture above the man's arm. Her face is exquisite, and in thorough keeping with the type of her class.

The sombre note predominates throughout Steinlen's work. That inevitable penalty of sadness which must be paid when the eye dares to look, and the soul dares to consider how our fellow beings struggle for existence.

A STUDY